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RUEHAD/AMEMBASSY ABU DHABI PRIORITY 4636  
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RUEHLB/AMEMBASSY BEIRUT PRIORITY 4659  
RUEHEG/AMEMBASSY CAIRO PRIORITY 3059  
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RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK PRIORITY 7711  
RUEHJI/AMCONSUL JEDDAH PRIORITY 0564  
RUEHJM/AMCONSUL JERUSALEM PRIORITY 0824  
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RHMFISS/COMSOCEUR VAIHINGEN GE PRIORITY  
RHMFIUU/COMSIXTHFLT PRIORITY

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STATE FOR NEA, NEA/IPA, NEA/PPD

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NSC FOR NEA STAFF

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CDR USCENTCOM MACDILL AFB FL FOR POLAD/USIA ADVISOR  
COMSOCEUR VAIHINGEN GE FOR PAO/POLAD  
COMSIXTHFLT FOR 019

JERUSALEM ALSO ICD  
LONDON ALSO FOR HKANONA AND POL  
PARIS ALSO FOR POL  
ROME FOR MFO

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SUBJECT: ISRAEL MEDIA REACTION

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SUBJECTS COVERED IN THIS REPORT:  
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Mideast

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Key stories in the media:  
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Yediot and Israel Radio reported that PM Ehud Olmert and DM Ehud Barak flew to Amman on Tuesday. King Abdullah II reportedly asked them to prevent a large-scale operation in Gaza. The media quoted the two senior Israelis as saying that Israel may eventually have to defend itself. Israel Radio reported that diplomatic sources in

London told the international Arabic daily Al-Hayat that Olmert updated Abdullah regarding the results of his most recent meeting with PA President Mahmoud Abbas. Olmert was quoted as saying that he had presented Abbas with several ideas as a basis for a general agreement to be signed before he leaves office. Abbas, however, is said to have turned down the offer and insisted that any general agreement include all the final status issues. He further insisted that Olmert halt the deterioration in the Gaza Strip.

The Jerusalem Post reported that defense officials expressed their satisfaction yesterday with the efforts of a U.S.-trained battalion of Palestinian policemen in Hebron. The battalion has arrested over 250 terror suspects affiliated with Hamas.

The media reported that the Histadrut Labor Federation intends to fight the government's economic recovery plan and possibly declare a strike. More media came out against the plan.

HaQaretz cited a poll saying that Likud is to triple its seats in the Knesset in the next elections (see below).

Leading media reported that yesterday President Shimon Peres told members of the British Parliament that Israel would have difficulty dismantling West Bank settlements without causing a civil war in Israel. Peres attacked Hamas and Iran. Some 150 students repeatedly interrupted his speech at the Sheldonian Theatre in Oxford.

Today, for the first time, the PA is publishing advertisements in the Hebrew-language press that present the details of the Arab peace plan. MK Ahmed Tibi (United Arab List Q TaQal) was instrumental in putting the project together.

Israel Radio reported that this morning a Hamas militant was killed by an IDF shell.

Maariv reported that, in order to counter Likud leader Benjamin Netanyahu's Qstar recruits, Q Tzipi Livni's election campaign will focus on personal attacks against him and try to wreck his credibility.

Leading media reported that the new right-wing, Orthodox party has chosen the name QHabayit HayehudiQ (the Jewish Home).

The Jerusalem Post quoted Internal Security Minister Avi Dichter as saying yesterday that Germany has banned Hizbullah's Al-Manar satellite television station.

The Jerusalem Post and other media reported that Prof. Arnold Munnich, a leading French geneticist and pediatrician, who is an adviser to French President Nicolas Sarkozy, is promoting a project that would bring Arab doctors and nurses and others from Mediterranean countries to Israel for advanced training.

Makor Rishon-Hatzofe quoted Netanyahu as saying yesterday before the United Jewish Communities General Assembly (GA) that President-elect Barack Obama has pledged to consider a military option against Iran.

Retired U.S. General John Abizaid was quoted as saying in an interview with Maariv that Israel does not have the military capability to destroy the Iranian nuclear project. However, Abizaid said that a nuclear Iran will be weaker and more vulnerable than today's Iran.

The Jerusalem Post and other media quoted Netanyahu as saying at the GA that there will be a dramatic turnaround in the Palestinian economy if he is elected.

The Jerusalem Post reported that a coalition of NGOs and educators hope to improve Muslim-Jewish coexistence in Israel by teaching Islam to Jews and Judaism to Muslims in the nation's public schools.

HaQaretz quoted Mohammed al-Hindi, a leader of Islamic Jihad in Gaza, as saying that Hamas plans to appoint a new PA president in January at the end of Abbas's four-year term. Hindi said that the Speaker of the Palestinian Legislative Council, Sheikh Aziz Dweik, will probably be named to the post. Dweik is currently jailed in Israel.

Leading media reported that the cabinet made a U-turn yesterday regarding anti-missile reinforcements for communities near the border with Gaza.

HaQaretz quoted government legal aides as saying that the police and IDF have more than 30 days to comply with a High Court decision to remove settlers from a house in Hebron whose ownership is claimed by Palestinians. Earlier this week the High Court ruled that settlers must leave the house within three days or be removed from it by the state. Israel Radio reported that settlers rioted near the house overnight.

Leading media quoted the IAEA as saying yesterday that a Syrian complex bombed by Israel bore features that would resemble those of an undeclared nuclear reactor and that Syria must cooperate more with UN inspectors to allow them to reach conclusions. Maariv reported that Russia is slowing down the pace of its missile sales to Syria. Maariv links this to IsraelQs messages that the deal would affect the subtle balance in the Middle East.

The Jerusalem Post reported that the state will pay American human rights activist Brian Avery 600,000 shekels (around \$ 151,170) in damages in an out-of-court settlement reached yesterday with his Israeli lawyer, Shlomo Licker. Lecker said that Avery did not have full medical insurance coverage in the U.S. and that the money would help defray some of the costs of the operations he must undergo. Avery was shot in Jenin in 2003 and suffered severe facial wounds.

Major media reported that FM Tzipi Livni announced yesterday that Israel has made a final decision to boycott the United Nations "Durban II" conference on human rights this spring, fearing it would once again be used as a forum for anti-Israeli sentiment. Ironically, this year's conference is scheduled for Holocaust Memorial Day.

HaQaretz reported that in recent years, and with the full knowledge and approval of the Defense Ministry, Israeli arms dealers have negotiated and sold military equipment to a number of countries defined by Israeli law as enemy states. HaQaretz sources were quoted as saying that the ministry has approved negotiations and sales between Israeli dealers and several Arab states including Iraq, Libya, and Yemen.

Yediot reported that during his visit to the U.S. next week, PM Olmert intends to ask President George Bush to pardon Jonathan Pollard.

Major media reported that, the U.S. Department of Transportation's Federal Aviation Administration has decided that the safety ranking of Israel's airports will be downgraded after serious flaws were discovered during an inspection yesterday. The decision is expected to harm the image of Israeli airlines abroad as well as incur considerable financial damage. Israeli airlines will not be allowed to increase the number of destinations they fly to in the U.S. or use different planes from those currently approved on the existing destinations. After the ranking is made formal, Israel will share its safety ranking with some 10 to 20 other countries, most of which are developing nations.

HaQaretz published the results of a Dialogue poll: If elections were held today, Likud would get 34 Knesset seats; Kadima: 28; Labor: 10; and Meretz: 7. The right-wing bloc, led by Likud, is also firming up in comparison to previous polls, with 64 MKs versus 56 for the center-left. In effect, the right is much stronger than the center left, since the leftQs count also includes 11 MKs from the Arab parties: They will not be asked to join the governing coalition and in the current political climate their only use will be as part of a "preventive bloc" in the Knesset.

Yediot printed the results of a Dahaf/Mina Zemach poll: Likud would get 32 seats; Kadima: 26; Shas: 11; the Arab parties: 11; Yisrael Beiteinu: 9; Labor: 8; the ultra-Orthodox parties (apart from Shas): 7; Meretz: 7; the Jewish Home: 6; and the Green Party: 3.

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Mideast:  
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## Summary:

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Diplomatic correspondent Aluf Benn wrote in the independent, left-leaning Ha'aretz: QObama will have to decide whether to take a clear stance [regarding Iran and the Arab peace initiative] before the Israeli elections and attempt to affect their results or to wait until he meets with the next prime minister and coordinate policies.

Middle East affairs commentator Dr. Guy Bechor, a lecturer at the Interdisciplinary Center, wrote in the mass-circulation, pluralist Yediot Aharonot: Q[A military] possibility [for Israel] is the wisdom of deterrence. This is the best way. To create a big bang, a strong and symbolic blow, after which the other side will know that it does not pay for it to continue to fire. This is also the accepted method in the Arab world.

The nationalist, Orthodox Makor Rishon-Hatzofe editorialized: QThe United NationsQ anti-Israeli face has once again been unmasked.

## Block Quotes:

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### I. "Waiting for Obama"

Diplomatic correspondent Aluf Benn wrote in the independent, left-leaning Ha'aretz (11/20): QIf Obama adopts the Arab initiative, it will strengthen Tzipi Livni, who seeks a permanent arrangement and a deep withdrawal from the territories, and say that Netanyahu's positions are on a collision course with America. If he talks up economic peace, that would back Netanyahu's claims that he can get along well with Obama. The attempt to revive the Arab peace plan and to sell it to Obama fits in with the argument over the order of priorities of the incoming administration: First Iran and then the Israeli-Arab conflict, as Netanyahu proposes; QPalestine firstQ to soften the Arab and Muslim hostility to the United States; or both at once, working on the assumption that dealing with the Palestinians will make it easier for the Arab states to support U.S. measures against Iran, and that dealing with Iran will make it easier for Israel to withdraw from territories in the Golan Heights and the West Bank. Obama will have to decide whether to take a clear stance before the Israeli elections and attempt to affect their results or to wait until he meets with the next prime minister and coordinate policies.

### II. QWhat Does Bashar Really Want?"

Middle East affairs commentator Dr. Guy Bechor, a lecturer at the Interdisciplinary Center, wrote in the mass-circulation, pluralist Yediot Aharonot (11/20): QThe other side has understood that it has to move the war into IsraelQs territory. This is how it operates, whether it is from Lebanon by means of missiles, from Gaza by means of rockets, or by means of human rockets in the form of suicide bombers and terror in IsraelQs cities. Israel, conversely, is barred from operating in the enemyQs territory, which is crowded with a civilian population that serves as a human shield for terror.

This population is aided by Qhuman rightsQ organizations, the global media, organizations within Israel, and more. The IDF is barred from acting, while nothing prevents the other side from penetrating IsraelQs territory by air or by land. This situation causes Israel to be despondent, feeling that its mighty army is not so relevant. There are three options for dealing with this situation and creating a new security doctrine. First possibility: passivity and blocking. This is the method Israel is employing today, in which we absorb and try to reduce the damage, or prevent it by achieving various truces. Second possibility: pro-activeness and attack. This method is not acceptable to Israel today, and it states that it is possible to attack despite the wall of civil defense on the other side, in the form of targeted killings, and many swift initiated actions, as well as surprising pinpointed military strikes. The third possibility is the wisdom of deterrence. This is the best way. To create a big bang, a strong and symbolic blow, after which the other side will know that it does not pay for it to continue to fire. This is also the accepted method in the Arab world.

### III. "The UN, as Is its Custom"

The nationalist, Orthodox Makor Rishon-Hatzofe editorialized (11/20): QThe United NationsQ anti-Israeli face has once again been unmasked. Instead of condemning the missile launching in the direction of Israeli communities in the south of the country, it has been quick to censure Israel over the harm done to the innocent Palestinian population.... The UNQs behavior utterly contradicts the UN Charter that places its mission in the respect of peaceful relations among nations in the international arena.... The silence of the Secretary-General of the UN can be interpreted as an assent with the decision made by the UN representation in Geneva.... Abu Mazen is the terroristsQ indirect spokesman.... He takes part in the slanderous attacks against the Jewish state in international politics, and the UN acts as his advocate.

CUNNINGHAM